



3.17 RECREATION

This section describes the recreational uses of the Humboldt area. It then considers the recreational effects associated with the proposed PALCO HCP/SYP, as well as the Headwaters Reserve creation.

3.17.1 Affected Environment

3.17.1.1 Humboldt Area

Humboldt County contains a wide assortment of recreational opportunities. Many of the recreational opportunities are outdoor-oriented and take advantage of the diverse landscapes and natural attractions found in Humboldt County. Recreation occurs in a number of different settings on lands owned and managed by a variety of entities. The following section discusses recreation that occurs near the PALCO lands on federal, state, and private lands.

3.17.1.2 Federal Recreation Lands

The main body of Six Rivers National Forest is located approximately 10 to 20 miles east of PALCO lands (Figure 1.2-1). The forest offers a variety of developed and dispersed recreational opportunities. Much of the recreation that occurs in the forest centers around the major river systems (the Smith River and its tributaries, the Klamath, the Trinity, and the Mad) that flow through it (Forest Service, 1995). The Forest contains 15 developed campgrounds with 370 sites. Dispersed recreation in the forest tends to occur on or next to the forest's rivers and reservoirs. A network of forest roads provides ample opportunity for motorized access to remote parts of the forest. The

forest also contains approximately 220 miles of maintained trails that cater to hikers and horseback riders.

Other large parcels of federal lands in Humboldt County that offer recreational opportunities include Redwood National Park, which is managed by the National Park Service and is approximately 60 miles north of PALCO lands; the King Range National Conservation Area, which is administered by the BLM and is approximately five miles southwest of PALCO lands; and the Samoa Dunes Recreational Area, which is approximately seven miles northwest of PALCO lands and is also administered by the BLM.

3.17.1.3 State Parks

The state of California has eight units in Humboldt County. The two units that are closest to the PALCO lands are described below.

Humboldt Redwoods State Park—The northern tip of Humboldt Redwoods State Park is located along the Eel River near the community of Shively. The northern portion of the park is surrounded by PALCO lands. The park is approximately 51,200 acres and contains over 17,000 acres of old-growth redwood forest. The park contains over 100 miles of trail, a visitor's center, three developed campgrounds, a hike and bike camp, several trail camps, environmental camps, a group campground, a group horse campground, and picnic and day use areas.

Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park—This approximately 400-acre park is surrounded by PALCO lands. The park is located along Highway 36 and the Van Duzen River. The park contains the Cheatham, Abe Wouk, Fisher, Williams and Graham, Rathert, Philip Bard, and Harriet Hunt Bard groves (which are all old-growth redwood groves). There are 30 campsites within the park, picnic areas, and 4.5 miles of trails and interpretive programs. Activities include camping, hiking, swimming, fishing (steelhead and salmon), and wildlife viewing.

3.17.1.4 Parks Managed by Local Jurisdictions

There are several county and community parks near PALCO lands. The following is a brief description of the closest ones.

Humboldt County

Humboldt County has 10 parks totaling 900 acres, most of which is not developed (Personal communication, Karen Suiker, Parks Director, Humboldt County, February 6, 1997). Van Duzen Park is surrounded by PALCO lands. It is 280 acres and contains four redwood groves—Pamplin, Redwood, Swimmers Delight, and Humboldt. Van Duzen Park has 30 developed campsites with showers, 2.5 to 3 miles of trails, and a group cookhouse. Two of the four groves are completely undeveloped. Most of the park is not highly developed, and it offers an array of opportunities for outdoor-nature oriented activities. Recreational activities in the parks include camping, boat launching, fishing, swimming, picnicking, beachcombing, hiking/biking/equestrian use of trails, and sightseeing.

Freshwater County Park is surrounded by the northern portion of the PALCO lands. The park is located along the Freshwater-Kneeland Road and offers day use activities only (swimming, fishing, picnicking).

City of Fortuna

The City of Fortuna has two parks, Rohner and Newburg parks. They provide regional sports and other developed recreational opportunities.

3.17.1.5 Private Sector Recreation and Tourism

PALCO Recreation Policy

Most of PALCO's lands are closed to the general public. Employees are allowed limited recreational use of PALCO land (Personal communication, R. Bettis, Land Manager, Pacific Lumber Company, Fortuna, California, February 26, 1997). A camp complex located along the North Fork Elk River is on PALCO lands. The camp is used by the Boy Scouts of America and church groups. There is also an archery club, a hunting camp, and a camp site used by a Finnish cultural group (PALCO, 1998). PALCO also operates a demonstration forest near Jordan Creek (PALCO, 1998).

Elk River Timber Company Recreation Policy

The Elk River Timber Company property is closed to all non-authorized entry, including recreational use of the property (Personal communication, Bill Kleiner, Western Timber Services [management company for the Elk River Timber Company property], January 30, 1997).

Private Recreation Providers

Many private enterprises provide recreational services in Humboldt County. The communities of Rio Dell, Scotia, Loleta, Fortuna, and Eureka have a number of accommodations, services, and attractions that cater to recreationists and tourists. One of the private recreational resources is the Redwood Empire Golf and Country Club, located in Fortuna.

3.17.2 Environmental Effects

This section addresses the expected consequences of the alternatives on recreation in the Humboldt Area. Table 3.17-1 provides a summary of environmental effects related to recreation.

Thresholds of Significance

To evaluate the comparative effects of the alternatives on recreation in the Humboldt area, several significance criteria were selected. The criteria were based on whether or not the proposed actions (1) conflicted with established recreational and educational use of the area, (2) substantially interfered with public access to an established recreational area, (3) substantially degraded the recreational experience of an area, and (4) created a public recreational or educational resource where none existed.

3.17.2.1 Humboldt Area

Alternative 1 (No Action/No Project)

As noted in Section 2.5.1, the evaluation of the No Action/No Project differs under CEQA and NEPA. For CEQA the No Action alternative is not projected into the long-term future. In the short term, the conformance with the FPRs, the FESA and CESA, and other federal and state laws is determined on a THP and site specific basis. A wide variety of mitigation measures tailored to local conditions is applied with the purpose of avoiding significant environmental effects and take of listed species. Consequently, most significant environmental effects of individual THPs can be expected to be mitigated to a level of less than significant

through implementation of the No Action/No Project alternative.

As noted in Section 2.5.1, the NEPA evaluation of the No Action alternative considers the implementation of wide, no-harvest RMZs as well as restrictions on the harvest of old growth redwood forest to model conditions over the short and long term. Ranges of RMZs are considered qualitatively because it is expected that adequate buffer widths could vary as a result of varying conditions on PALCO lands.

Most of PALCO's lands are closed to the general public and would continue to be with this alternative. Employees and some organized groups would still be allowed limited recreational use of PALCO land. The Elk River Timber Company would also continue to be closed to all non-authorized entry. Federal and state lands that receive recreation use would continue to do so.

Under this alternative, there would be no conflict with established public recreational and educational use of PALCO lands because there currently is no public use of PALCO lands. Likewise, there would be no interference with public access to recreational or educational areas. There would also be no creation of a public recreational resource. Continued harvest of PALCO lands could have localized effects on the quality of the recreational experience at Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park and the northern boundary of Humboldt Redwoods State Park. Harvest activities could be viewed from parts of the two parks. This could diminish the quality of the recreational experience for some visitors.

Table 3.17-1. Summary of Environmental Effects Related to Recreation in the Humboldt Area

Alternative	Conflict with Established Recreation Use	Conflict with Access to Established Recreation Area	Substantial Degradation of Recreational Experience of an Area	Creation of new Public Recreation Resource
Alternative 1	No conflict on PALCO lands or adjacent lands.	None	Primary harvest method clearcutting (83,100 acres). Slight but not significant impact on parts of Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park and parts of Humboldt Redwoods State Park.	None
Alternative 2	Reserve lands accessible to public. No conflicts on adjacent lands.	None	Primary harvest method clearcutting (157,600 acres). Impacts on state parks potentially greater than Alt. 1, but not significant. Beneficial impact due to more public-use lands.	7,503-acre Reserve Beneficial impact
Alternative 2a	Same as Alt. 2	None	Primary harvest method selective harvest. Impacts on state parks less than Alt. 1 and Alt. 2. Beneficial impact due to more public-use lands.	5,739-acre Reserve
Alternative 3	Same as Alt. 2	None	Harvest activities would be less visible than for Alternatives 2 and 2a.	Same as Alt. 2
Alternative 4	Same as Alt. 2	None	No clearcutting diminishes chances of degradation. Beneficial impact due to more public-use lands.	63,673-acre Reserve
Source: Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation				

Alternatives 2 (Proposed Action/ Proposed Project) and 2a (No Elk River Property), and 3 (Property-wide Selective Harvest)

All of these alternatives would establish a Reserve (of varying sizes) and would have similar effects on recreation in the Humboldt County area. The primary purpose of the 7,503-acre (5,739 acres under Alternative 2a) Reserve would be to protect old-growth redwood forests and threatened and endangered species. Public use of the Reserve would be

focused on non-disturbing, low-impact activities such as hiking, interpretive education, and wildlife observation.

These activities and visitation levels would have to be consistent with the protection of wildlife and other natural resources. Motorized vehicle use in the proposed Reserve would be restricted to some existing roads. The level of development of trails, parking areas, restroom facilities, and interpretive facilities would be the minimum necessary to maintain the Reserve's

ecological integrity. Public access to the Reserve is expected to be provided from the north. The northern access road would provide access primarily for hikers. A second access road would not be available for public use.

The Reserve would be cooperatively managed by the BLM and the California Resources Agency (or another state agency appointed to manage the reserve). A management plan would be developed for the Reserve (with public involvement) and updated periodically. No site-specific plans have been developed. Site-specific management and restoration activities within the Reserve would require separate NEPA and CEQA procedures.

No harvest would be allowed in Owl Creek for the life of the ITP. Grizzly Creek will also be managed as an MMCA with a five-year moratorium on timber harvest. If these lands are purchased, it may be possible, especially at Grizzly Creek, for some limited, low intensity, and passive recreational visitation to occur. However, because the two tracts of land are surrounded by PALCO lands, access would be restricted and potentially limited. Because the Grizzly Creek tract is next to Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, there would be potential for recreationists from the state park. However, no determination regarding public use of the two tracts of land can occur until the lands are actually acquired. Until such time that (and if) the lands are purchased, no recreational access by the public would be permitted.

Because of the numerous outdoor recreational opportunities available in Humboldt County, establishment of the proposed Reserve (and the potential establishment of Owl Creek and Grizzly Creek) would not add greatly to the county's inventory of outdoor recreational opportunities. However, the Reserve would contain the major old-growth

redwood groves closest to the City of Eureka. As a result, it would likely receive use by local residents wanting to experience redwoods and not wanting to drive to Humboldt Redwoods and Grizzly Creek Redwoods state parks, or to Redwood National Park.

Visitors to Humboldt County may add the Headwaters Reserve to their itinerary if they are visiting area parks and natural areas. It is likely that the publicity surrounding the establishment of the proposed Reserve would result in some visitors to the county visiting the Reserve. However, because of the low level of facility development that would occur at the Reserve, it can be assumed that most visitors would be attracted to more developed state or national parks where campgrounds and other visitor facilities would be available.

These alternatives would not conflict with established public recreational and educational resources and would create additional resources. Continued harvest of PALCO lands outside of the Reserve could have localized effects on the quality of the recreational experience near the portions of Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, and the proposed Reserve that borders PALCO lands. As under Alternative 1, harvest activities could be viewed from the portions of the parks and the proposed Reserve near PALCO lands. This would diminish the quality of the recreational experience for some visitors.

Alternative 3 would not use the clearcut silvicultural prescription. Instead, selective harvest would be used. As a result, harvest activities would be less noticeable to visitors at the parks. Harvest activities on PALCO lands visible from nearby parks would be much less visible than with Alternatives 2 and 2A. As a result, park users viewing PALCO

lands beyond the parks would see a more natural and less altered landscape.

Alternative 4 (63,000-acre No-harvest Public Reserve)

This alternative would result in a Reserve of 63,673 acres. The establishment of a Reserve of this size would offer the public more recreational and educational opportunities than the Reserves associated with the other alternatives. However, most of these lands are in early or mid-seral vegetative conditions and have high densities of logging roads. Consequently, the quality of the recreational experience on these lands would be very low for two to three decades as the existing trees grew larger. In addition to offering more opportunities within this Reserve, Alternative 4 would also result in no harvesting on the PALCO lands adjacent to the Humboldt Redwoods and Grizzly Creek Redwoods state parks. As a result, there would be no harvesting effects on recreationists, as described in the other alternatives.

3.17.2.2 Federal Recreation Lands

The creation of the proposed Reserve would add a federally managed resource that would be used for recreation to a limited degree. The Reserve would allow federal land managers and recreation professionals to add to the current mix of recreational opportunities on federal lands. Establishment of the Reserve would likely not draw visitors away from other federal lands. Thus, establishment of the Reserve under the various alternatives should have little or no effect on the recreational use of other significant federal recreation lands in the Humboldt County area such as Redwood National Park and Six Rivers National Forest.

3.17.2.3 State Parks

As with federal lands that receive recreational use, state park recreational

use would not be affected by establishment of the Reserve. The effects of the alternatives on the two state parks next to PALCO lands (Humboldt Redwoods and Grizzly Creek Redwoods state parks) are discussed above under the description of the effects of each alternative.

3.17.2.4 Parks Managed by Local Jurisdictions

As with federal and state lands that receive recreational use, the use of Humboldt County parks would not be affected by establishment of the Reserve.

3.17.2.5 Private Sector Recreation and Tourism

There are many private sector enterprises that provide recreational services and opportunities in Humboldt County. The communities of Rio Dell, Scotia, Loleta, Fortuna, and Eureka have numerous visitor accommodations, services, and attractions that cater to recreationists and tourists.

The establishment of the proposed Reserve could have a minor effect on private sector businesses. Although it is not likely that the Reserve would draw significant numbers of new visitors to Humboldt County, it would attract some. Most tourists to Humboldt County visit the area to experience and enjoy the natural features of the county (Personal communication, D. Leonard, Director, Humboldt County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Eureka, California, May 12, 1997). Therefore, the establishment of another natural attraction could attract some visitors. It is possible that local tourism and/or ecotourism companies would encourage visitors to visit the Reserve and enhance its usage as an educational resource.

3.17.3 Cumulative Effects

There is currently no public access to PALCO land for recreation. The action alternatives would create reserves that would add to the amount of land available to the public for recreation. Timber harvest on PALCO lands would be seen by recreationists at some locations within Humboldt Redwoods and Grizzly Creek Redwoods state parks. Future timber harvest on PALCO and other private timber production lands could be seen from the two state parks (and other recreational facilities throughout Humboldt County). However, because timber harvest activities are viewed

throughout Humboldt County and because views of most proposed harvest associated with the alternatives would not be seen in most parts of the parks used by visitors (due to screening by vegetation and topography), the impacts of harvest will not have a significant cumulative effect on most recreationists using parks and facilities in Humboldt County.

3.17.4 Mitigation

Because there are no significant effects associated with recreation, no additional mitigation is recommended.